THE PLACE OF *JAPA* IN THE *MOKṢADHARMA-PARVAN* (MB. XII 189–193) AND THE *YOGA-SŪTRAS*: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

By

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The *Mokṣadharmaparvan* (*Md*) of the *Mahābhārata* (*Mb*), as is well-known, provides a rich source-material for the history of Indian religious and philosophical thought. Studies of this *parvan* have produced interesting and instructive results bearing on the early phases of the Sāṁkhya, the Yoga, the Vaiśeṣika and Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism before these latter gained their finished form in their respective systems. It is proposed to study in this paper, from this standpoint, the role of *Japa* – a religious practice of inaudibly repeating a sacred syllable or verse – as described in the *Md* and its implications in the light of its comparison with that in the classical *Yoga* system of Patañjali.

Chapters 189 to 193 of the *Md* deal with the importance of *Japa* (inaudible recitation of a Vedic verse) and the *Jāpaka* (the reciter of the *Japa*). Yudhiṣṭhira requests Bhīṣma to enlighten him on the following questions[1] :

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[1] This and other quotations from the *Mb* in this article are from the critical edition of the *Mb* published by the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona.

किं फलं जपतामुक्तं क्व वा तिष्ठन्ति जापकाः । 3
जपस्य च विधिं कृत्स्नं वक्तुमर्हसि मेऽनघ ।
जापका इति किं चैतत् सांख्ययोगक्रियाविधिः ॥ 4
किं यज्ञविधिरेवैष किमेतज्जप्यमुच्यते ।
एतन्मे सर्वमाचक्ष्व सर्वज्ञो ह्यसि मे मतः ॥ 5

— Mb. XII. 189.

The change in the sequence of questions from the one appearing in these verses is deliberately made above, as it better suits the sequence of replies given by Bhīṣma in the *Mb* Text.

(i) Does *Japa* form part of the pursuit of *Sāṁkya* and the practice of *Yoga* ? Do Japakas belong to the Sāṁkhya and Yoga ? or do they belong to the tradition of Vedic sacrifice only ?

(ii) What is to be murmured or recited (*Japyam*) ?

(iii) What is the procedure or technique of *Japa* ?

(iv) What is the fruit of *Japa* and what position do the *Jāpakas* attain ? . —Bhīṣma, in his discourse, attempts to answer these questions. We shall present the summary of Bhīṣma's replies given in his discourse in the order of the questions given above :

(i) Regarding the first question, Bhīṣma purports to say that Japa constitutes an independent discipline and a way of life belonging to the Vedic sacrificial tradition and is different from the Sāṁkhya and the Yoga. Japa is relinquished in the Sāṁkhya or the Vedānta. But it is also found that the Sāṁkhya and the Yoga sometimes make use of Japa according to their needs. Japa, however, is not an indispensable practice with them. Japa accomplished with the repetition of Vedic texts, constitutes by itself a discipline leading to peace and tranquillity which is experienced as a result of abiding in Brahman.[1]

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[1] संन्यास एव वेदान्तं वर्तते जपनं प्रति ।
वेदवादाभिनिर्वृत्ता शान्तिर्ब्रह्मण्यवस्थितौ ।
मार्गा तावप्युभावितौ संश्रितौ न च संश्रितौ ॥ 7— Mb. ib.

On the 1st and 3rd lines of this triplet, Nīlakaṇṭha, the commentator of the *Mb*, says :

"सांख्ये जपक्रियात्याग एवेत्याह । ..... एवं ब्रह्मात्मैक्यप्रमितौ जपानपेक्षामुक्त्वा द्वयोरपि मार्गयोर्जपस्य आरादुपकारित्वेन अपेक्षां साक्षात्कारोत्पत्तावनपेक्षां चाह — संश्रितौ जपमिति शेषः । "—

The 2nd line is read differently by Nīlakaṇṭha. This line, constituted as above in the critical edition, means, according to Dr. Belvalkar, the editor of the Śāntiparvan (See his 'Critical Notes' in the critical edition) : "The peace-and tranquillity (शान्तिः) which ensues from silent *Saṁhitā-japa* (Veda-vāda) is (by itself) capable of steadiness in or mergence into Brahman ". Dr. Belvalkar interprets this line—and I agree with him—to mean that it sets forth another mode of life different from that of the

(*Continued on the next page*)

The Jāpaka or the reciter of Japa has to imbibe and practise all those virtues which are required of the followers of the Sāṁkhya and the Yoga. It is said that the following observances and disciplines are required *even for one* who wants to lead the life of a *Jāpaka*: Concentration of the mind, control of the senses, pursuit of truth, worship of the fire, moderation in food, withdrawal from the objects of sense, tranquillity etc.[1] These observances are associated with the life of a Jāpaka who lives in the household. A Jāpaka can, however, renounce the household and can even attain to the highest stage of self-realization which the follower of the Yoga reaches. For that he should renounce all ritual acts. He should sit on a raised seat of Kuśa grass, with Kuśa in hand. He should bid good-bye to all worldly objects of sense and should not think of them. He should take to the threefold path of concentration—concentration on gross objects,

(*Continued from the preceding page*)

Vedānta. He, however, interprets उभौ मार्गौ in the 3rd line to mean two modes of life— the Vedānta and the Vedavāda. I, however differ from him in this interpretation. I take उभौ मार्गौ as Nīlakaṇṭha has done, to mean the *Sāṁkhya* and the *Yoga* in view of their mention in verse 4 quoted in footnote 1 on page 63 above. I hold that the recitation of the Veda (*Vedavāda*) i.e. the *Japa* is advocated by this discourse of the *Mb* as an independent way to gain higher spiritual attainments, a way equal in status to the Sāṁkhya and the Yoga.— J. W. Hauer in his 'Der Yoga' (1958) while discussing (p. 198) this text from the *Mb.* remarks to the effect : " We must draw the conclusion that the Murmelmeditation (Japa) was at that time a recognized way ".

1 . मनःसमाधिरत्रापि तथेन्द्रियजयः स्मृतः 8
सत्यमग्निपरीचारो विविक्तानां च सेवनम् ।
ध्यानं तपो दमः शान्तिरनसूया मिताशनम् ॥ 9
विषयप्रतिसंहारो मितजल्पस्तथा शमः ।
एष प्रवृत्तको धर्मो निवृत्तकमथो शृणु ॥ 10
यथा निवर्तते कर्म जपतो ब्रह्मचारिणः ।
एतत्सर्वमशेषेण यथोक्तं परिवर्जयेत् ॥ 11
कुशोच्चयनिषण्णः सन् कुशहस्तः कुशैः शिखी ।
चीरैः परिवृतस्तस्मिन् मध्ये छन्नः कुशैस्तथा ॥ 12
विषयेभ्यो नमस्कुर्याद्विषयान्न च भावयेत् । 13

The words **अत्रापि** in bold type above mean 'even here' i. e. in this discipline in the life of a Jāpaka

on subtle objects and concentration without any object. Poised in this state, he mutters a sacred Vedic verse (*Saṁhitā*) and meditates on Brahman.[1] On the strength of this Japa, he can pass into concentration and meditation. The *Japa* prepares the Jāpaka for that stage of meditation which would finally lead him to Samādhi (undisturbed consciousness). During the last stage of Samādhi, even the dhyāna is also abandoned. In the last stage, he attains to the Ātman, immortal and pure.

(ii) and (iii)

With regard to the questions (ii) and (iii) relating respectively to what is to be recited and to the procedure by which it is to be recited, Bhīṣma does not give definite, detailed answers but merely indicates them during his reply to what we have named as question (i) above. What is to be recited is referred to as a 'wholesome Vedic text'[2] which may mean a famous Vedic verse such as the Gāyatrī or the sacred Vedic symbol 'Om'. Regarding the way in which the *Japa* is to be recited, Bhīṣma indicates that it should be done with mind withdrawn from external objects and concentrated on the cherished goal. It is said that the reciter of Japa attains whatever he desires. The goal gains higher in spiritual values, as the personal desire diminishes. Accordingly, a Jāpaka reaches the highest state of bliss, only when he has succeeded in reciting the Japa without any desire.[3]

(iv) Regarding the fourth question as to the 'fruit' of *Japa* and the position to which the *Jāpakas* attain, Bhīṣma gives a fairly detailed answer which may be summarised as follows:

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1 तद्धिया ध्यायति ब्रह्म जपन् वै संहितां हिताम् ।
संन्यस्यत्यथ वा तां वै समाधौ पर्यवस्थितः ॥ 14
ध्यानमुत्पादयत्यत्र संहिताबलसंश्रयात् । 15
ध्यानक्रियापरो युक्तो ध्यानवान् ध्याननिश्चयः ।
ध्याने समाधिमुत्पाद्य तदपि त्यजति क्रमात् ॥ 18

2 जपन् वै संहितां हिताम् ।— Mb XII. 189 14; cf. ib 192. 6; 192. 78; 192. 118.

3 अथ वेच्छति रागात्मा सर्वं तदधितिष्ठति ।
यच्च प्रार्थयते तच्च मनसा प्रतिपद्यते ॥ 125
अथवा वीक्षते लोकान् सर्वान् निरयसंस्थितान् ।
निःस्पृहः सर्वतो मुक्तस्तत्रैव रमते सुखी ॥ 126 — Mb. 192

The fruit of *Japa* varies according to the mental and spiritual make-up of the aspirant. The highest goal of *Japa* and the highest spiritual eminence to which a *Jāpaka* attains is, of course, self-realization which is attained by one who practises the Japa in a spirit completly free from desire. All other goals are of a lower order (*niraya*) determined by the desires or attachments which the reciter cherishes for earthly or heavenly pleasures or superhuman powers.[1] One may wish to be born as the creator god Brahmadeva[2] or to migrate to the world of gods where there are heavenly cars or planes moving at one's sweet will, different kinds of pleasure-gardens and lotus-ponds of pellucid water.[3] But in comparison with the highest goal of the relization of the pure Ātman reached by a Jāpaka free from desire, all these goals are low and depraved and are as good or as bad as 'Niraya' (hell).[4]

While describing the importance of *Japa* and the *Jāpaka*, Bhīṣma tries to impress on Yudhiṣṭhira that a *Jāpaka* practising *Japa* with a true selfless spirit ranks equal with a Yogin in the matter of fruit or achievement. To illustrate his point, Bhīṣma narrates the story (chapters 192 and 193) of one great *Jāpaka*

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1 अभिध्यापूर्वकं जप्यं कुरुते यश्च मोहितः ।
यत्राभिध्यां स कुरुते स वै निरयमृच्छति ॥ 6
अथैश्वर्यप्रवृत्तः सञ्जापकस्तत्र रज्यते ।
स एव निरयस्तस्य नासौ तस्मात् प्रमुच्यते ॥ 7
रागेण जापको जप्यं कुरुते तत्र मोहितः ।
यत्रास्य रागः पतति तत्र तत्रोपजायते ॥ 8
दृढग्राही करोमीति जप्यं जपति जापकः ।
न संपूर्णो न वा युक्तो निरयं सोऽधिगच्छति 11— Mb XII. 190

2 ... ब्राह्मीं संश्रयते तनुम् ॥ 19
अथ वा नेच्छते तत्र ब्रह्मकायनिषेवणम् । 20— Mb. XII 189

3 अमूनि यानि स्थानानि देवानां परमात्मनाम् । 3
दिव्यानि कामचारीणि विमानानि सभास्तथा ।
आक्रीडा विविधा राजन् पद्मिन्यश्चामलोदकाः ॥ 4
एते वै निरयास्तात स्थानस्य परमात्मनः ॥ 6

4 आत्मकेवलतां प्राप्तस्तत्र गत्वा न शोचति ।
ईदृशं परमं स्थानं निरयास्ते च तादृशाः ॥ 10
तस्य स्थानवरस्येह सर्वे निरयसंज्ञिताः 11

named Kauśika Paippalādi. This Kauśika lived practising *Japa* at the foot of the Himālayas (192. 4–5). He was a model of what a selfless *Jāpaka* could be, with no thought for the fruit of *Japa*,[1] practising *Japa* only for the sake of *Japa*. He was not vulnerable to the temptations of heavenly worlds and heavenly pleasures held out to him by Sāvitrī herself, the mother of the Vedas (192.8). He disdained to accept the offer of the immortal worlds. "My sole joy is in *Japa*" he said, "I would prefer to go to heaven only if I am allowed to retain my body ".[2] His desire to retain his body, even when migrating to heaven, was perhaps due to his love of *Japa* which only a possession of his earthy body would enable him to recite. According to the course of this story told by Bhīṣma, this Jāpaka Kauśika made one king named Ikṣvāku a co-sharer in the 'fruit' of the *Japa* which had accrued to him without his wishing it. As a result of the fruition of 'that fruit', both Kauśika and Ikṣvāku were greeted by gods and other denizens of heaven. They are also described, as practising the successive stages of Yoga, viz. withdrawal from the objects of sense, control of the breaths, concentration of mind until finally they are said to pass into a trance in which they achieve self-realization.[3] Then at last, it is said, a resplendent flame broke forth from the palate of Kauśika. It was in the shape of a manikin measuring the span of a hand. It was hailed with great joy by Pitāmaha Brahmadeva with this pronouncement: "There is no doubt that there is equality in fruit or achievement between the

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1 जप्ये मे रमतां मनः ।— Mb XII 192. 24
नाभिसंधिर्मया जप्ये कृतपूर्वः कथंचन ।
जप्यस्य राजशार्दूल कथं जानाम्यहं फलम् ॥— ib. 54

2 रमे जपन् महाभाग कृतं लोकैः सनातनैः ।
सशरीरेण गन्तव्यो मया स्वर्गो न वा विभो ॥ Mb. XII. 192. 26

3 विषयप्रतिसंहारमुभावेव प्रचक्रतुः ॥ 15
प्राणापानौ तथोदानं समानं व्यानमेव च ।
एवं तान् मनसि स्थाप्य दधतुः प्राणयोर्मनः ॥ 16
निश्चेष्टाभ्यां शरीराभ्यां स्थिरदृष्टी समाहितौ ।
जितासनौ तथाधाय मूर्धन्यात्मानमेव च ॥ 18— Mb. XII. 193

Jāpaka and the Yogin".[1] The manikin of Kauśika then entered the mouth of Brahmadeva. King Ikṣvāku, the co-sharer of Kauśika in the latter's fruit, also achieved the same distinction of entering into communion with Brahmadeva. The gods, who had assembled there, made their obeisance to Brahmadeva and said "It was all for the Jāpaka that we came here. We witnessed the great fruit which accrued to both a Yogin and a Jāpaka".[2]

We have given above a summary of the discourse in the *Mb.* about the *Japa* and the *Jāpaka*. The important points which emerge from our study of this discourse may be summarized as follows:

(1) Japa—the inaudible repetition of a Vedic text (*Saṁhitā*)—forms an essential part of Vedic sacrificial tradition which associates the recitation of the sacred texts (*Japa*, *Saṁhitādhyāya* or *Svādhyāya*) with the worship of the sacred fires (*Agniparicārah*).

(2) *Japa* does not necessarily form part of the Sāṁkhya and the Yoga though the latter might use it in the preliminary stages of their respective disciplines.

(3) *Japa* constitutes an independent discipline and a way of life requiring the cultivation of all those moral and spiritual qualities associated with the Yoga. The practice of Japa leads the reciter (*Jāpaka* or *Saṁhitādhyāyin*) to progressively higher stages of religious and spiritual progress. *Japa* practised for its own sake and without the slightst taint of desire leads the Jāpaka to the highest goal of self-realization.

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1 तालुदेशमथोद्दात्म्य ब्राह्मणस्य महात्मनः।
ज्योतिर्ज्वाला सुमहती जगाम त्रिदिवं तदा॥ 19
ततः स्वागतमित्याह तत्तेजः स पितामहः।
प्रादेशमात्रं पुरुषं प्रत्युद्गम्य विशांपते॥
भूयश्चैवापरं प्राह वचनं मधुरं स सः।
जापकैस्तुल्यफलता योगानां नात्र संशयः॥— ib. 21–22

2 स्वयंभुवमथो देवा अभिवाद्य ततोऽब्रुवन्।
जापकार्थमयं यत्नस्तदर्थं वयमागताः। 26
योगजापकयोर्दृष्टं फलं सुमहदद्य वै। 27— Mb. XII. 193.

(4) The *Jāpaka* with regard to his religious and spiritual attainments stands on an equal footing with the *Yogin*.

After having studied the status and position enjoyed by *Japa* in the *Mb.* it would be interesting and instructive to compare it with that of *Japa* in the *Yogasūtras* (*Ys*) of Patañjali. It will be recalled by the students of the *Ys.* that there are suggested therein two ways or techniques of Yoga[1]: One in which " any man or woman and even one who is an agnostic may pursue Yogic practices and attain *to samprajñāta* Samādhi and liberation without devotion to god or without god's grace "; the other in which " *Samādhi* and liberation may be secured by devotion to Īśvara ". It is in the second way of Yoga in which God's help is sought that the Japa is described to be playing its part in the *Ys.* It is stated in the *Ys.* [2] that *Praṇava* or the mystic syllable *Om* is an expressive symbol of God and that the *Japa* of that syllable and constant reflection on God for whom the symbol stands leads to the concentration of mind and " secures for the practitioner attainment of right knowledge of the nature of the soul and the absence of hindrances that distract the mind ".[3] It may be noted here that the *Japa* meant in the *Ys.* is not the *Japa* of any *Saṁhitā* as in the *Mb.* but the *Japa* in particular of *Om* (Praṇava). The *Vyāsa-Bhāṣya* suggests another synonym for *Japa*, namely '*Svādhyāya*'.[4] 'Svādhyāya' is mentioned thrice in the *Ys.*[5] as one of the 'observances' preliminary to the

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1 See Mm P. V. Kane 'History of Dharmaśāstra', vol. V. Part II. pp. 1412ff.

2 'तस्य वाचकः प्रणवः । तज्जपस्तदर्थभावनम् ।
ततः प्रत्यक्चेतनाधिगमोऽप्यन्तरायाभावश्च ।'— Ys I. 27-29

3 See Kane op. cit. p. 1413.

4 See Vyāsa-Bhāṣya (edition : Bombay Sanskrit & Prakrit Series 1917). on *Ys* I. 28 :
" तदस्य योगिनः प्रणवं जपतः प्रणवार्थं च भावयतश्चित्तमेकाग्र्यं संपद्यते । तथा चोक्तम्—
स्वाध्यायाद्योगमासीत योगात्स्वाध्यायमामसते । स्वाध्याययोगसंपत्त्या परमात्मा प्रकाशते ।'
The verse is from Viṣṇupurāṇa VI. 6.2. See Kane op. cit. p. 1399.

5 'तपःस्वाध्यायेश्वरप्रणिधानानि क्रियायोगः' Ys II. 1 ('स्वाध्यायः प्रणवादिपवित्राणां जपो मोक्षशास्त्राध्ययनं वा' Vyāsa-Bhāṣya), 'शौचसंतोषतपःस्वाध्यायेश्वरप्रणिधानानि नियमाः ।' Ys II. 32, ('स्वाध्यायो मोक्षशास्त्राणाम् अध्ययनं प्रणवजपो वा' Vyāsa-Bhāṣya) 'स्वाध्यायादिष्टदेवतासंप्रयोगः' Ys. II, 44 ('देवा ऋषयः सिद्धाश्च स्वाध्यायशीलदर्शनं गच्छन्ति कार्यं चास्य वर्तन्ते' Vyāsa-Bhāṣya.).

attainment of *Samādhi* (undisturbed consciousness) and means, according to *Vyāsa-Bhāṣya*, 'the *Japa* of *Om*, and other holy texts or the study of texts treating of liberation'. The continuous practice of *Svādhyāya* is stated to result in the union of the aspirant with the deity of his choice. It should also be remembered that the *Ys.* does not attach supreme importance to *Japa* or *Svādhyāya*, as is done in the *Mb.*. According to the *Ys.*, the proper Yogic technique consists of eight 'parts[1]' ('aṅgāni') of which 'Niyama' (observances) constitutes only one 'part' namely the second, the first being 'Yama'. *Svādhyāya* or *Japa* forms a subdivision of this 'Niyama' or 'observance' part of the Yoga technique, and its practice is calculated to purify the mind and spirit of the Yogic aspirant.[2]

From the data presented above from the *Ys.* regarding *Japa*, it is hoped that the difference in out-look towards *Japa* between the *Mb* passage and the *Ys* will be clear. The *Japa* in the *Ys* does not play a sovereign role as it does in the *Mb.* The *Japa* in the *Ys* is restricted to the repetition of the mystic syllable *om* and does not necessarily embrace the Vedic *Saṁhitā* as it does in the *Mb.* The *Japa* in the *Ys* of the symbol *om* ultimately leads to meditating on Īśvara-the meaning of that symbol. Thus the Japa in the *Ys* requires the aspirant to rise above or leave behind the syllable itself and seize by his mental effort the target itself symbolized by the *Om.*

After this brief survey of the comparative role which *Japa* plays in the *Mb* and the *Ys*, it would be certainly interesting to inquire into a rationale which can explain this difference in the

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[1] यम- नियम- आसन- प्राणायाम- प्रत्याहार- धारणा- ध्यान- समाधयोऽष्टावङ्गानि । Ys II. 29.—शौच- संतोष- तप-स्वाध्याय- ईश्वरप्राणिधानानि नियमाः । — ib. II 32.

[2] Vijñānabhikṣu in his 'Yogasārasaṁgraha [Theosophical Publishing House (1933) page 38] quotes the following verses to explain the purpose of Svādhyāya with its three varieties :

'वेदान्तशतरुद्रीयप्रणवादिजपं बुधाः । सत्त्वशुद्धिकरं पुंसां स्वाध्यायं परिचक्षते ।
स्वाध्यायस्य त्रयो भेदा वाचिकोपांशुमानसा. । उत्तरोत्तरवैशिष्ट्यं प्राहुर्वेदार्थवादिनः ॥
यः शाब्दबोधजनन परेषां शृण्वतां स्फुटम् । स्वाध्यायो वाचिक. प्रोक्तः उपांशोरेष लक्षणम् ॥
ओष्ठयोः स्पन्दमात्रेण परस्याशब्दबोधकः । उपांशुरेष निर्दिष्ट. साहस्रो वाचिकाज्जप. ॥
यत्पदाक्षरसंगत्या परिस्पन्दविवर्जितम् । चिन्तनं सर्वशब्दानां मानसं तं जपं विदुः ॥

status of the *Japa*. It appears that the idea and the technique of *Japa* properly belong, as the *Mb* chapters testify, to the ancient orthodox Vedic tradition in which sacrifice and sacrificial rites played the most prominent part. Vedic sacrificial rites demanded the chanting of the Vedic verses or *mantras* to accompany them. The *mantras* accompanying these rites were considered like all Vedic *Mantras* to have a magical mystical power by means of which persons connected with these rites were believed to attain the objects of their desire. The ritualism and the magical-mystical teachinque that developed around it grew to enormous proportions in the period of the *Brāhmaṇas*. There are found references in the Brāhmaṇas to *Japa* connected with the sacrificial ritual[1]. The *mantras*, besides being chanted during the ritual, were also inaudibly recited to add to the mystic potency of the ritual. *Japa*, thus, appears to belong to the Vedic sacrificial tradition which required the silent recitation of a Vedic mantra in a secrificial ritual.

The study and recitation (*Svādhyāya*) of the sacred Vedic texts (saṁhitā) formed a necessary part of daily routine in the religious life of the Aryans in ancient India.[2] Svādhyāya was elevated to the status of a *Brahmayajña*.[3] The recitation of the Vedic texts became, in course of time, a lifelong occupation of a certain class of Brāhmaṇas. There are found in the *Mb* also references to such Brāhmaṇas devoted to the study and recitation of Vedic texts.[4] It was believed that the words and syllables of the Vedic texts, independent of their sense, were charged with a magical-mystical potency and that the correct and devout recitation of the Vedic Saṁhitā conferred on the reciter supernatural

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[1] उपांशु जपति । ऐतरेयब्राह्मणम् 2.38

प्रशास्ता जपं जपित्वा — ib 6.14.

अग्निमीक्षमाणो जपति ।—शतपथब्राह्मणम् 1.5. 1.26 See also ibid. 1.7.4. 20–21.

[2] स्वाध्यायप्रवचनाभ्यां प्रमदितव्यम् । — तैत्तिरीय. उप. 1.11

स्वाध्यायोऽध्येतव्यः । — शतपथ ब्रा. 11.5.7.2

Cf. नित्यस्वाध्यायी — Mb V. 40.23; ib. 30.8.

[3] स्वाध्यायो वै ब्रह्मयज्ञः ।—शतपथब्रा. 11.5.6.3.

[4] (याज्योपयाजौ ब्रह्मर्षी) संहिताध्ययने युक्तौ गोत्रतश्चापि काश्यपौ ।—Mb I. 155.8.

and spiritual powers and the fulfilment of his desires.[1] It is stated in a Vedāṅga text that the *Puruṣasūkta* and the Sūkta of Viṣṇu lead to heaven and that it is the highest meditation of Yoga.[2] The *Mb* chapters mentioned above which glorify the silent recitation (Japa) of the Vedic Saṁhitā and regard such a Jāpaka (reciter) as an equal of a Yogin clearly belong to this ancient ritualistic tradition.

As religious and philosophic thought progressed and became deeper and more contemplative as in the Upaniṣads, it gradually freed itself from the encumbrances and shackles of sacrificial rites and the vast array of Vedic *Saṁhitās* accompanying them. Thus there grew out of the Vedic tradition itself, another current of free thought, knowledge and contemplation which were guided rather by the 'spirit' of the Veda, than by its 'letter'. The Upaniṣadic Brahmaism of Yājnavalkya grew in such a climate of free, unfettered thought. This climate was also congenial to the growth of the Sāṁkhya ideas with their insistence on knowlegde and of Yoga with its insistence on disciplining the mind as a means of achieving the highest state of emancipation. In its quest for an object of contemplation leading ultimately to Brahman, Upaniṣadic thought evolved a symbol named Praṇava (*om*) which was considered the concentrated quintessence of the Veda. It was the *Japa* of this Upaniṣadic Praṇava which was incorporated into Yoga[3] by those among the Yogic schools which considered some Supreme Being as God necessary to guide the Yogic aspirant to higher spiritual experiences.

The *Japa* and the *Jāpaka* described in the *Mb* (XII 189–193) appear to belong to the first strand of the Vedic tradition, viz. that of the orthodox sacrificial ritualism as represented in the *Brāhmaṇa* literature which attached magical-mystical significance to the *mantras* and their recitation. From the laudatory

1 'Learning the sacred texts suffices to obtain the fulfilment of all desires' Ṛgvidhāna 1.7. 1– a Vedāṅga text quoted by Mircea Eliade in his 'Yoga : Immortality and Freedom, (p. 136) (Routledge & Kegan Paul); vide also M. Winternitz 'History of Indian Literature' vol. I. p. 287.

2 Quoted by M. Eliade. op. cit. p. 138.

3 See Mm. P. V. Kane op. cit. p. 1417.

description of the Jāpaka with which the *Mb* text concludes, viz. that from the point of final achievement, the Jāpaka is equal to a Yogin, one can not resist the impression that the champions of the Vedic sacrificial ritualistic tradition are trying to meet the challenge from Yoga by boosting *Japa* as its rival and by incorporting into the Japa discipline the various elements associated with the Yoga.

The *Japa* with its technique full of magical and mystical significance as developed in the *Brāhmaṇas* and as represented in the *Mb* appears to be the ancient analogue of some practices in later *tantrism*[1] which put a premium on the *Japa* of sacred *mantras* as a means of attaining the highest state of spiritual illumination. We find in later religious practices, penetrated by tantrism, predominance of the *Japa* technique with its mystical power. According to popular religious beliefs among the masses, the muttering of God's name, independent of the meaning and intention of the reciter, leads to the acquisition of religious merit, and the achievement of final salvation.

[1] vide : "It was tantrism especially Buddhistic as well as Saivaistic, that raised the *Mantras* ... to the dignity of a vehicle of salvation. The universal vogue of the sacred formula, on the one hand, led to the highest speculations on 'mystical sounds' and on the other to the Lamaistic prayer-wheel. Vasubandhu, in his *Bodhisattvabhāmi*, wrote that the true meaning of the *Mantras* lay in their absence of meaning ... All indefinite repetition leads to the destruction of language; in some mystical traditions, this destruction appears to be the condition for further experiences".

— Mircea Eliade, op. cit. p. 215–216.